



**A few words  
from State  
Superintendent  
of Schools  
Lillian M.  
Lowery**

Some have called computer code "the new cursive," a foundational skill that all students can learn. I believe there is a lot of truth to that. For that reason, I'm joining [Code.org](http://Code.org) to challenge every Maryland public school student, educator and their families to participate in the "Hour of Code" during Computer Science Education Week next month.

Maryland is a national leader in the technology-driven economy, and our students must have opportunities to acquire in-demand skills, including computer coding, to meet the needs of local employers and compete in the global marketplace. I plan to participate in the Hour of Code. I am encouraging all young people and adults to add coding to their marketable skill set, and our vision is to offer all students access to computer science education.

Next month is Computer Science Education Month and [Code.org](http://Code.org) will offer its annual Hour of Code contest during the week of December 8-14. Last year, Middle River Middle School in Baltimore County was one of 50 schools nationwide to win \$10,000 from [Code.org](http://Code.org) to buy technology for its classrooms. More importantly, students had the chance to learn computer programming.

[Code.org](http://Code.org) is a national non-profit dedicated to expanding participation in computer science by making it available in more schools. [Code.org](http://Code.org) joined us this week for "Maryland CSI," the Maryland Computer Science Initiative, at Annapolis High School. It was an exciting evening, showing the enthusiasm for computer science that exists throughout the State.

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Computer science is one aspect of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM)

## EDUCATORS SCORE WELL IN FIRST EVALUATION DATA

Maryland teacher and principal evaluation data was released last week, and the numbers were favorable.



State Board Vice President Mary Kay Finan (center) discusses the Teacher Principal Evaluation data.

In the first full report on teacher evaluations, completed last school year, 97.2 percent were rated either "highly effective" or "effective" in the State's three-tiered rating system. Likewise, 97.5 percent of principals were rated either "effective" or "highly effective."

"Maryland's educational success is built solidly on the effectiveness of our educators, and today's data release tells us that many of our teachers and leaders are getting the job done," said Maryland State Superintendent of Schools Lillian M. Lowery. "These results give us a starting point, and provide important data for the State and our systems as continue to strengthen instruction for students."

The data based on the 2013-14 school year found that 40.8 percent of teachers were rated "highly effective," the top tier of the three-part rating system. Likewise, 48.3 percent of principals were rated "highly effective," under the evaluation system.

There are 43,805 teacher ratings at 1,112 principal ratings included in today's release, with the first largest participating systems (Prince George's County, Baltimore County, Baltimore City, Anne Arundel County, and Howard County) representing two-thirds of the ratings. An independent analysis of the performance of the evaluation models and their component parts will be conducted by the MidAtlantic Comprehensive Center at WestEd and will be issued this winter.

Education. Last week, we unveiled an entire plan for Maryland STEM education, and we launched a website full of resources and tools. Our hope is that it kindles innovation in classrooms throughout the State.

The STEM Plan pinpoints five focus areas: professional learning, STEM resources, equity, student STEM learning experiences, and communications. By equipping educators with skills and tools for teaching and providing high quality resources that support teaching, improved STEM programs in public schools can lay the foundation for success for both students and the State.

Governor O'Malley recognized the trend, and in 2009 a report by the Governor's STEM Task Force made seven recommendations aimed at establishing Maryland as a global leader in workforce development. MSDE's STEM Plan builds on the Task Force report, establishing a path forward for education policy and practice in this essential area.

STEM education is an approach to teaching and learning that integrates the content and skills of science, technology, engineering and math, and many of our schools are already on board. The website includes a terrific look at the work already taking place.

The new website outlines the goal of building the capacity of educators to implement high-quality integrated STEM instruction, then provides examples that currently exist around the State. To help ensure that Maryland's students develop a strong foundation in STEM from an early age, the State has worked with teacher preparation programs and certifications to develop educators trained to teach an integrated STEM curriculum to elementary students. Through this initiative, 12 teacher preparation programs have changed their undergraduate and/or postgraduate programs to strengthen the skills of elementary teachers to teach integrated STEM content. To date, more than 500 teacher candidates have been impacted by changes made to pre-service elementary education programs as a result of this work.

The STEM plan can be found at <http://msde.maryland.gov/stem>

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Many STEM careers require postsecondary education. This is one of the many reasons why the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) have teamed up with the American Council on Education (ACE) to create the first Maryland College Application Campaign (MCAC) to increase

“This is our first data release, and local school systems have done an amazing job in providing this information to us,” said David Volrath, who leads Maryland’s Teacher and Principal Evaluation efforts. “As we strengthen this process moving forward, ratings could be affected.”

Maryland school systems have spent the past four years developing TPE programs. Maryland’s winning \$250 million Race to the Top federal grant proposal included a statewide TPE system. Every Maryland school has begun to see the benefits from the professional development and collaboration used to develop SLOs to guide instruction. Systems are currently in the second year of implementing new evaluation systems, and MSDE will continue to monitor progress in that implementation.

Last week’s data release marked the first Statewide effort to evaluate teacher and principal effectiveness based in part on student growth. Each school district could develop its own evaluation system within State parameters, or could use a State-developed system. In the end, each district constructed an evaluation model based on its own interests, and each local superintendent and head of the local bargaining unit signed off on the design.

Evaluations were based on two factors: professional practice - planning and preparation, instructional delivery, classroom environment, and professional responsibility - and student growth. For the first two years of the evaluation system, student growth will be calculated by using Student Learning Objectives (SLOs) and other evidence of student growth available in the local system. Other measures may include local benchmark assessments and end-of-course tests.

SLOs are measurable instructional goals established for a specific group of students over a set period of time. State assessment data will become available for consideration as part of the student growth calculation again in 2016-17.

As required by the U.S. Department of Education, local school systems also ran their evaluation model calculations using Maryland School Assessment scores to gauge the effect that data would have on ratings. The addition of the scores had only a minimal effect on ratings, systems found.

Twenty-two of Maryland’s 24 school systems participated in the first year of the Statewide Teacher and Principal Evaluation Program—those

the number of students applying and gaining acceptance to college

MCAC will take place November 10-14, with 21 high schools in seven school systems. ACE spearheads the national effort to help students and their families navigate the college application process, increasing the number of students applying to college early in their senior year—particularly from those who would be the first members of their families to pursue higher education.

MHEC awarded funding to MSDE through the College Access Challenge Grant in support of this college access initiative.

High schools in Baltimore City, Cecil, Dorchester, Prince George's, Somerset, Washington, and Wicomico counties are taking part. Maryland is implementing a comprehensive and supportive program to assist students in participating schools with the postsecondary application process.

During MCAC Week in November, students in the designated schools are given the opportunity to apply to any Maryland community college, independent college or public university. The initiative includes working with staff from the Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) and school counselors to prepare students for the process. It also establishes a formal partnership with College Goal Maryland (CGMD) to assist with completing financial aid applications.

The MCAC process culminates with participating high schools holding College Decision Day events in May. Maryland plans to implement this initiative Statewide in the future.

For more information about the Maryland College Application Campaign, click [here](#). For more on the national campaign, click [here](#).

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systems that signed on to the Rate to the Top program. Only Frederick and Montgomery counties did not participate in its first year. Those systems will be joining the program for the current school year, 2014-15.

Complete information on the Teacher-Principal Evaluations data release can be found [here](#).

## PARCC TRANSITION LEADS TO GRADUATION CHANGES

The Maryland State Board of Education last week approved a framework for updating high school graduation requirements as the State transitions to new assessments.

Under the plan approved by the State Board, passing the new Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) exams in English 10 and Algebra I will not become a graduation requirement until the 2016-17 school year. The Board in December will likely act on proposed regulations based on the framework.

"Today's discussion on the move to assessments aligned to Maryland's College and Career Ready Standards was focused on our students in the same way we've focused on our educators throughout this period," Dr. Mary Kay Finan, Vice President of the Maryland State Board of Education, said after the meeting. "Our two-year plan will allow our students and teachers to become more knowledgeable in the more rigorous standards during the transition."

Although the PARCC exams are being given this year for the first time in mathematics and English, the process with which the passing scores are set will not be completed until December 2015. This transition caused challenges for some students who had taken HSA-aligned courses, as well as students enrolled in the first years of the PARCC-aligned courses.

For students enrolled in the tested high school courses during 2014-15 and 2015-16, the following requirements will be included in a new regulatory proposal:

- Students who have taken the Algebra I HSA-aligned course will have the opportunity to retake the exam in 2014-15. Because the HSA-aligned test ends after the 2014-15 school year, students who have not passed will not need to take a make-up test in

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## Calendar

November 10-14 – Maryland College Application Campaign (MCAC)

December 8-14 – Hour of Code Contest

December 16 – Maryland State Board of Education meeting, Baltimore

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### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Video: Maryland STEM**

November 3, 2014

Special Projects Producer Cindy Hasselbring talks about the benefits of STEM in Maryland; courses in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math.



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Video: Jody Zepp Named 2014-2015 Maryland Teacher Of The Year**

October 10, 2014

Howard County's Jody Zepp wins the 2014-15 Teacher of the Year award in Maryland. See the moment at Martin's West as the announcement is made during the 24th annual Teacher of the Year celebration.



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Board News**

September 23, 2014

Maryland adopts a Teacher and Principal Evaluation plan, and the Board hears a progress report on the first year's implementation of its predecessor. Also, Maryland honors its Principals of the Year!



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Attendance Works**

September 24, 2014

As the 2014-15 school year gets underway, Maryland joins a national campaign to combat truancy. Maryland Schools Superintendent Lillian Lowery talks about the campaign and Attendance Works.



### VIDEO HIGHLIGHTS

#### **Student Learning Objectives**

September 17, 2014

Teachers, principals and superintendents gather in Annapolis for training involving Student Learning Objectives. In these professional development sessions, they learn the process of crafting student learning targets. SLO's, innovations fueled and funded by Maryland's Race to the Top grant, serve as a measure of student growth.

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2015-16 in order to graduate. These students must still pass the course as part of their graduation requirements.

- Students who have taken the English 10 HSA-aligned course will have the opportunity to re-take the exam in 2014-15. Because the HSA-aligned test ends after the 2014-15 school year, students who have not passed will not need to take a make-up test in 2015-16 in order to graduate. These students must still pass the course as part of their graduation requirements.
- Students taking the Algebra I course aligned to PARCC in 2014-15 and 2015-16, and not passing the test, will not be required to pass the exam in order to graduate. These students must still pass the course as part of their graduation requirements.
- Students taking the English 10 course aligned to PARCC in 2014-15 and 2015-16, and not passing the test, will not be required to pass the exam in order to graduate. These students must still pass the course as part of their graduation requirements.
- As in the past, all students still must pass the government and biology High School Assessments - or successfully complete the Bridge Plan project-based assessment in those subjects - in order to graduate.

The presentation made to the Maryland State Board of Education recommended that students enrolled in the PARCC-aligned courses during 2016-17 and beyond will have to pass all four assessments, or successfully complete Bridge Plan projects in those subjects, to receive a Maryland high school diploma.

## In the News

Maryland State Board Delays Testing Requirement  
for High School Graduation

*Washington Post*

Frederick Schools Continue Digital Push

*Frederick News Post*

Commentary: Standardized Tests Must Measure Up,  
by Education Secretary Arne Duncan

*Washington Post*

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